



Birds, bees, lizards and trees

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In December, residents from *Greenest Street's* Alexander Rd met the Council's Biodiversity Advisor, Rob Cross, to discuss some of the ways they could improve the encourage native plants and animals in their own suburban backyards. Not an easy task, given that New Zealand now has more introduced plants naturalized in the wild than native species. Here are some of his tips:

Weeds: Our own backyards can be a rich source of weeds and seeds as they escape via birds, wind and the sole of your boots to invade our native bush. Use a good plant book or website to identify and deal with them.

Native plants: Even within New Zealand we have area-specific native flora. Growing plants from your ecological district means they are best suited to the local conditions. The free booklet *Growing Native Plants in Kapiti*, available from Council service centres or online, details ecological zones and associated plants for Kāpiti.

Pest animals: Possums and rats thrive in urban areas due to the abundance of food and shelter. They also pose a major threat to native plants and birds (not to mention your fruit trees and electrical wiring). Killing possums and rats on your own property can make a contribution to local biodiversity - even better if a street or neighbourhood work together, like north Wellington Rd has. See Alexander Rd's blog for photos of resident Diane's successes.

Bird feeders can encourage feathered visitors. But be smart about it – hygiene is crucial to ensure disease transmission between birds is kept to a minimum; place feeders in a safe location to avoid creating a fast food outlet for cats; put out only natural, fresh foods to support good health.

Lizards: A lizard refuge can be a rewarding addition to your garden (and can do double-duty as a frog pond surround, like Donna's in Alexander Rd), but sadly is not much use if you have a cat. A basic tension exists between cats and native fauna and we need to ensure that the attractive environment we're creating isn't luring wildlife into danger.

Resources:



- www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/threats-and-impacts for info on plant and animal pests.
- www.gw.govt.nz/pest-plants-6 lists for pest plants in our region.
- www.weedbusters.co.nz for weed identification and control.
- <http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/get-involved/backyard-projects> for bird feeder and lizard garden instructions.
- www.predatortraps.com/traps.htm for DOC series traps.

The Greenest Street competition is an initiative of the Kapiti Coast District Council. For more information, contact the Sustainable Communities Coordinator on 04-296 4700 or see www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/greenest-street